



EXECUTIVE Q&A WITH ROBIN FIELDS

Lawyer relies on diverse background

PERSONALLY SPEAKING

- **Position:** Partner, Conner & Winters law firm.
- **Education:** Putnam City West High School; Old Dominion University in Norfolk, Va., bachelor's in communications and marketing; University of Oklahoma, juris doctorate.
- **Family:** Chloe, a 6-year-old, 4½-pound Papillon. She named her first "child," a Lhasa apso who lived to 16½, Brandeis, after U.S. Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis.
- **Pastimes/guilty pleasures:** OU football (she recently sprung for club level seats and has gone to all the national championships and most bowls); fast sports cars (she drives a Porsche 911 Carrera); regular spa treatments, including weekly manicures and massages, monthly pedicures, regular facials and travel.

BY PAULA BURKES

Business Writer
 pburkes@opubco.com

One of a handful of female oil and gas litigators in Oklahoma, Robin Fields frequently finds herself the only woman, or maybe one of two, in a boardroom. That doesn't deter the spirited, 5-foot-tall, redheaded Fields from being feminine, be it choosing to cover her wingback office chairs in pale pink fabric, sporting crimson nail polish or carrying a smart red Furla handbag with her tailored dark pantsuit.

Fields says Conner & Winters, which she joined in April 2007 after 20 years with the disbanded McKinney, Stringer & Webster and three years with a smaller firm, particularly values and supports females. Of 110 attorneys, 32 are women who may choose to work flexible hours, she said.

Based in Oklahoma City, Fields is a partner of the Tulsa-headquartered firm, which has branch offices in Texas, Arkansas, New Mexico and Washington, D.C. In Tulsa and Oklahoma City, Conner & Winters sponsors annual community events to help female partners better connect with their clients, and potential clients, who are female business professionals, Fields said. One of her favorites here was themed "Biz & Bling," held at Naifeh Fine Jewelry in Casady Square.

Part of how Fields defines herself is being a mentor to up-and-coming attorneys, she said.

"I've seen many great, young, talented lawyers grow and be better than they thought they could ever be," she said, "and a good many of them are women."

From her 17th-floor office at Leadership Square, Fields, 56, recently sat down with *The Oklahoman* to talk about her personal and professional life. This is an edited transcript:

Q: Can you tell us about your childhood?

A: My father was one of the first computer programmers. I can remember going with him to work at a bank one Saturday when there were room-sized computers operated by punch cards. My mother worked as a legal secretary until I was 10, stayed home for several years, and then worked for years in the state auditor's office. They loved and inspired me, telling me, "God gave you an incredible brain. Use it and you can do anything you want."

It was almost like I was raised an only child because they divorced when I was 3. Both remarried and had other families. I have four brothers and two sisters, but they're seven to 16 years younger than I am.

At school, everybody knew me because I had one foot in the jock world and the other in thespians. I was in pep club and also in

drama, extemporaneous speaking and debate, where I learned to see and argue both sides of issues.

Q: And college? Did you take pre-law classes with an eye on law school?

A: I chose Old Dominion University because I wanted the adventure of going away to school, and for a time, considered becoming an actress — or yes, an attorney.

I played the lead in the school production of "Mother Courage," landed a bit part in an introduction of a Captain Kangaroo TV episode, and worked paid performances for a nearby dinner theater. But I chose a double major in marketing and communications because I knew I could fall back on it, where if I wanted to pursue acting, could do so without a degree in theater.

After graduation and before going to law school at OU, I sold retail advertising for a newspaper in Norfolk, then moved home and sold two more years for *The Oklahoman*. I think I'm a better lawyer because of those three years selling. It gave me an understanding of business analysis and objectives.

Q: What do you like best about the law, and in particular, your specialty of oil and gas?

A: It's something that's constantly changing and has challenged me every day. Every deposition, brief, case is different. In my area, you deal with such diverse issues — everything from drilling for oil and gas to transporting it. One of my clients uses gas to generate electricity.

Q: How did the oil bust affect your work?

A: You mean oil busts. People in the industry will tell you we not only had a bust in the mid-1980s, but also another bust five years ago. I was busier; litigation

actually goes up when the money's not there. If people are making money, they're not concerned with 100 grand, but when the money dries up, they'll fight over \$10,000.

Q: What's been your most significant case?

A: I recently won a career case that originally was filed in 1995 and ultimately appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court. It involved every company that measured underground natural gas storage on federal and Indian land and included 77 different lawsuits against 330 defendants from whom the claimant sought \$20 billion to \$40 billion. I represented two groups of companies,

or nine clients. A huge thing is the federal judge granted a request for attorney fees to be paid by the claimant.

Q: And your most memorable jury case?

A: I wrestled whether to select a president of a small bank for a jury on an oil and gas case that involved a banking issue, and was surprised when the prosecutors didn't seek to disqualify him for the same concerns I had. It turned out my gut feeling — which I attribute to my acting days and sizing up my audiences — to put him on the jury was right. He was named foreman and was key in influencing our favorable verdict.



Robin Fields is a partner with Conner & Winters law firm. She is in her Oklahoma City office.

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